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HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES

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Ashley Kemp
Executive Director
Oklahoma Ethics Commission
ADDRESS HERE

Ms. Kemp,

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the amounts of money expended by 501(c) 4 organizations to fund public communication campaigns, the purpose of which is to influence official action by the Oklahoma Legislature and other official government bodies.

Often these public campaigns are timed directly around when critical governmental decisions are going to be made by public officials and they advocate for one position or another. That in and of itself isn't the problem. Rather, these campaigns are often funded by parties with a material financial interest in the outcome. They don't mention a particular candidate or election usually.

Because many of these campaigns are funded and executed through "social welfare groups" who obtain a Federal 501(c)4 tax exempt status, they are allowed to bundle money from many sources and are not required to disclose where the money for these campaigns come from.

The consequence of this anonymity is that the general citizenry who is targeted with these campaign messages are unable to determine the credibility of the "voice" they are hearing and they have no idea if the persons funding the campaign are doing so out of their own self interest.

I contend that the citizenry deserves to understand *who* is behind the voice of the advocacy because that better informs citizens as to the credibility of the message they are hearing.

Let me be clear. I am in no way suggesting we limit these organizations ability to speak to the public through these campaigns. But I believe the public deserves to know whose "voice" they are hearing when they are being asked through this type of public communication campaign to take a position on a certain issue.

Therefore, I would respectfully request that the Oklahoma Ethics Commission engage in rule making that requires clear disclosure of all expenditures by 501(c)4 entities that are designed to influence official action and all related sources of funds that enabled the expenditures.

I am happy to discuss this further if you would desire to do so.

Respectfully,

Meloyde Blancett
Representative District 78

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